

Hepatitis A Outbreak Linked to Frozen Berries – Updated August 1, 2013

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and state and local health departments are investigating an outbreak of acute hepatitis A virus (HAV) infections that may be associated with the consumption of Townsend Farms brand Organic Antioxidant Blend sold by Costco stores and Organic Antioxidant Berry Blend sold by Harris Teeter. Additionally, a voluntary recall of Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels distributed by Scenic Fruit Company was announced on 6/26/2013 due to potential risk of HAV contamination. At this time, no illnesses have been linked to the Woodstock product. As of August 1, 2013, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has identified four patients associated with the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berries from Costco. None of these patients have been hospitalized; all have recovered, and there have been no deaths. No other hepatitis A illnesses associated with any of the other products or companies have been reported in Utah. Utah stores that carry the affected products have removed the products from their stores. This information will be updated as the investigation progresses.

More information about this outbreak is available on the CDC webpage:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Outbreaks/2013/A1b-03-31/>.

Information for the Public

What is hepatitis A and how serious is it?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis A is a contagious liver disease that is usually spread when a person eats food or drinks beverages that have been infected with fecal matter (stool) from the hepatitis A virus. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. While hepatitis A can cause severe sickness, almost all people who get hepatitis A recover completely and have no lasting liver damage.

What type of symptoms should I look for?

Hepatitis A can develop between two and six weeks after eating contaminated food or drink. Some people with hepatitis A do not have any symptoms. If you do have symptoms, they may include the following:

- Yellow eyes or skin
- Abdominal pain
- Pale stools (feces)
- Dark urine

What should I do if I purchased this product?

Do not eat Townsend Farms Organic Anti-Oxidant Blend or Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels. The Harris Teeter Brand is not sold in Utah stores. Throw away any remaining product or any foods made with it, even if someone ate it without becoming ill.

What should I do if I ate any of these products?

If you ate any of these products more than six weeks ago and currently feel well, your risk of infection is very low. If you ate any of these products between two and six weeks ago and now have symptoms of hepatitis A, see your health care provider right away. Talk to your health care provider about getting the hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG). Hepatitis A vaccine or IG may prevent disease, but only if given within two weeks after eating the contaminated food. If you have already been vaccinated against hepatitis A or have had hepatitis A disease in the past, you are protected and unlikely to become ill. Most children are vaccinated against hepatitis A and have protection. Hepatitis A vaccine is a two-dose series, given six months apart.

What should I do if I am pregnant and ate any of these products?

Talk to your healthcare provider. The safety of hepatitis A vaccine for pregnant women has not been determined. But there is no evidence that it is harmful to either pregnant women or their unborn babies. Pregnancy or breastfeeding are not conditions that prohibit getting IG.

What if I ate mixed berries or berry smoothies from a local restaurant?

Check with the restaurant and find out if they use the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Berry Blend or Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels. If they do and you have eaten berries or foods containing the product within the last two weeks, contact your health care provider about getting the hepatitis A vaccine to prevent illness. If it has been more than two weeks, watch for any signs and symptoms of hepatitis A infection.

What if I don't have a health care provider or health insurance?

To search for a list of providers, including pharmacies, that may carry hepatitis A vaccine, visit the Vaccination Locator at <http://www.immunize-utah.org>. Call first to make certain that hepatitis A vaccine is available. Children from birth through 18 years of age may be eligible to receive low-cost or no-cost vaccine through the Utah Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. Call 1-800-275-0659 or 801-538-9450 for more information about the Utah VFC Program. You can also contact your local health department or community health center. For a list of Utah local health departments, visit <http://www.ualhd.org/lhds.html>. For a list of Utah Community Health Centers, visit <http://www.auch.org/about-health-centers/health-center-locations>.

Information for Health Professionals**What is the current status of this outbreak?**

As the investigation continues, more cases are reported. For current information, visit the CDC webpage at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/Outbreaks/2013/A1b-03-31/>.

As of August 1, 2013, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has identified four patients associated with the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Blend frozen berries from Costco. None of these patients

have been hospitalized; all have recovered, and there have been no deaths. No other hepatitis A illnesses associated with any of the other products or companies have been reported in Utah.

Costco has removed this product from their stores and is notifying customers who bought this product. However, we know that not all customers who brought this product have been notified. No illnesses are currently associated with Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels. The company's decision to voluntarily recall products is made from an abundance of caution in response to an ongoing outbreak investigation by the FDA and CDC. The organic pomegranates are imported from Turkey. Utah food safety inspectors have contacted stores in Utah that received the Woodstock product as a recall effectiveness check and report the retail outlets have removed Woodstock product from their shelves. Consumers who purchased the Woodstock product are advised to discard the product, or return it to the store.

UDOH staff are coordinating the investigation efforts with local health departments, CDC and FDA.

What are the treatment recommendations for patients who consumed the affected product?

There are no specific treatment guidelines for hepatitis A. Treatment for it is supportive. Those who have eaten the product within the last two weeks are advised to receive hepatitis A vaccine or immune globulin (IG), as appropriate (most people are recommended to receive hepatitis A vaccine). UDOH guidelines recommend hepatitis A vaccine for persons one year to 40 years of age.

IG is recommended for the following persons:

- Persons >40 years, specifically for persons 75 years of age and older
- Infants <12 months
- Immunocompromised persons
- Persons who have had chronic liver disease
- Persons for whom vaccination is contraindicated

Can pregnant women receive the hepatitis A vaccine or the IG?

The safety of hepatitis A vaccine for pregnant women has not been determined. But there is no evidence that it is harmful to either pregnant women or their unborn babies. Pregnancy or lactation is not a contraindication to IG use.

What is the recommendation for patients who think they may have consumed this product but aren't sure?

The recommendations are the same for these people as for those who are sure they consumed the product. However, IG supply may be limited; so, attempt to verify exposure prior to administration if IG is warranted.

What if my patient has been exposed and has only received one dose of HAV vaccine?

Persons who have received one dose of hepatitis A vaccine at least one month before a hepatitis A exposure do not need prophylaxis. One dose of hepatitis A vaccine is highly effective against hepatitis A infection; however, exposed persons should complete the two-series, given six months apart, if it has been more than six months since their first dose.

What is the recommendation for patients who ate other frozen berry products, but did not eat the Townsend Farms product or the Woodstock product?

The products of concern are the Townsend Farms Organic Antioxidant Berry Blend purchased at Costco or the Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels. Costco has pulled the product and the public is being notified. The Harris Teeter product is not sold in Utah. There are no illnesses indicated at present from the Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels. Utah food safety inspectors have contacted stores in Utah that received the Woodstock product as a recall effectiveness check and report the retail outlets have removed the product from their shelves. Consumers who purchased the Woodstock product are advised to discard the product, or return it to the store.

Any susceptible person who would like to reduce their risk of hepatitis A infection may receive hepatitis A vaccine. IG is not recommended for persons who did not consume the affected product.

Should patients who don't know if they've received hepatitis A vaccine and have no records be vaccinated?

Persons who have been exposed to the product and have not been vaccinated should receive the single-antigen hepatitis A vaccine, administered in a two-dose series, given six months apart. High-risk individuals, infants younger than age one, and adults over 40 years of age may receive the IG, if warranted. Providers are encouraged to use recalls/reminders to notify patients when the next dose is due.

What if un- or under-insured patients request hepatitis A vaccine?

If you are unable to provide vaccine for such patients, they may be advised to contact their local health department or community health center. For a list of Utah local health department phone numbers, visit <http://www.ualhd.org/lhds.html>. For a list of Utah Community Health Centers, visit <http://www.auch.org/about-health-centers/health-center-locations>.

In addition, persons may find providers who have the hepatitis A vaccine, including pharmacies, by visiting the Vaccinator Locator at: <http://www.immunize-utah.org>. Persons wanting hepatitis A vaccine should call facilities they find on this website before they go in to make sure hepatitis A vaccine is available.

All un- and under-insured children birth through 18 years of age in Utah are eligible for low-cost or no-cost vaccines through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. Call 1-800-275-0659 or 801-538-9450 for more information about the VFC Program.

Should my asymptomatic patients be tested for HAV infection?

Patients who recall consuming Townsend Farms Organic Anti-Oxidant Blend or the Woodstock Frozen Organic Pomegranate Kernels should **NOT** be tested for HAV infection unless they have symptoms of acute hepatitis. False positive HAV IgM test results are common when asymptomatic people are tested. Therefore, asymptomatic persons should not be tested. Notify your state or local health department if any highly suspicious cases are identified.

What should I tell my patients?

The risk of HAV infection is very small and not everyone who ate this product will get sick. However, anyone who ate this product should watch for symptoms of acute hepatitis A, including: yellow eyes or skin (jaundice), abdominal pain, vomiting, pale stools, or dark urine. People infected with hepatitis A can spread it to others. It is very important that people who have symptoms practice good hygiene and do not go to work, especially if they work in food service, health care or child care.